

North Little Rock Centennial Committee Announces Diamond-Studded Entertainment & Events Lineup For North Little Rock's "Party of the Century"

Media Release: Diamond-Studded Entertainment & Events

The **North Little Rock Centennial Committee** hosted a festive mini-street party on Main Street in front of City Hall at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, March 24, to announce the many *facets* of their diamond-studded entertainment and events line-up for the two-day "**Party of The Century**".

The event celebrating the 100th birthday of the City of North Little Rock, will feature special events and entertainment throughout the weekend on Friday, April 30, from 5 p.m.-11 p.m. and on Saturday, May 1, from 8 a.m.-10 p.m. All entertainment will be held on Main Street between Broadway and Seventh Street, and will be free to the public.

North Little Rock Centennial Chair **Vincent M. Insalaco**, Entertainment Chairperson **Ann - Marie LeBlanc**, and North Little Rock History Commission Director **Sandra Taylor Smith**, announced the festival's all-star headline entertainment acts and named the schedule of national and local performing groups, in addition to giving new exciting details about festival events, and recognizing corporate and media sponsors.

"We only get to throw a 100th year birthday party like this once in a lifetime," **Insalaco** told the enthusiastic crowd at the news conference, "and with 4 stages of entertainment and over 75 acts, there are so many exciting events taking place that it's hard to know where to begin."

"It's certainly the most exciting event that's taken place since I have lived here, and I am so proud to have played a part in this wonderful gift to the community," agreed Le Blanc, whose committee has been responsible for securing the entertainment lineup.

But **Insalaco** didn't have any trouble beginning the media conference with the first of two great pieces of news ...that the Honorary Centennial Chairperson, Academy Award winner and North Little Rock native **Mary Steenburgen and husband**, Emmy Award Winning **Actor Ted Danson**, will be actively involved in the weekend events.

The second big announcement followed...that Saturday night's headline act will be **Diamond Rio**, a country music band which has cut quite a path through the country music world and is winner of six vocal group of the year awards, four gold and two platinum albums, and eight Grammy nominations ."

" We are also really excited that **The Groanups**, a fabulous 9-piece group featuring popular veteran Arkansas musicians, will entertain the crowds preceding Diamond Rio from 6-7:30 p.m., followed by a short Festival Closing Ceremony. This will include remarks by **United States Senator Mark Pryor** (Dem-AR), **NLR Mayor Patrick Hays** and a special drawing.

Diamond Rio isn't the only diamond "attraction" of the Centennial. Festival attendees will be able to register to win a beautiful *sparkling* one and a half carat diamond bangle bracelet valued at \$2,500 donated by Stanley Jewelers Gemologist in North Little Rock . The drawing and presentation will be made to the lucky winner by **Mary Steenburgen and Ted Danson** prior to the **Diamond Rio Concert**.

Diamond Rio will then take the stage from 8-9:30 p.m., followed by the grand finale **Northern Lights Fireworks** which will be shot from the Main Street viaduct "looking north" Insalaco said.

This is the first time this has ever been done.

Friday Night

Centennial Celebration Kickoff

The City's Centennial Celebration festivities will kickoff "**The Party of the Century**" with **Opening Ceremonies** on Friday night, April 30, at 6 p.m. featuring **Mayor Patrick H. Hays**, **Governor Mike Huckabee**, who will proclaim Arkansas Heritage Month at this occasion; Honorary Centennial Chairperson, Academy Award winner and North Little Rock native **Mary Steenburgen and husband Ted Danson**; **Congressman Vic Snyder** (Dem-AR), and a host of local dignitaries.

Contest Presentations

Presentations will be made on stage by **Mary Steenburgen** to Centennial contest winners in the following categories: *Poetry, Children's Art, Cache, and Memorial Design*. The poem selected as the Centennial's best will be read aloud by the author.

Friday Night Street Party

The **Friday Night Street Party** sponsored by Waste Management has entertainment for families and party goers of all ages. An **Argenta Art Walk** featuring noted artists and the Children's Art Contest winners, will begin at 5 p.m. with music provided at City Hall by the **North Little Rock High School Jazz Band**.

Budweiser Stage 2 (City Hall)- at 7 p.m. will host "The Illusions & Comedy of professional performer **Randall Eller**, whose performances in over 40 states during the last 15 years have delighted audiences with fast paced illusions, audience participation, and comedy. At 8:30 p.m., the headline performance will be given by renowned physical comedy and pantomime performer **Robert Shields**, described early in his career as " the greatest mime in America" by master mime artist Marcel Marceau. Robert Shields of Shields and Yarnell had a hit TV show during the late 1970's.

Comcast Stage 1 (7th & Main)- The official **Street Party** will kick off at 7:00 p.m. with four popular bands : 7-8 p.m. **Big John Miller Band**; 8-9 p.m. **Third Degree Band**; 9-10 p.m. **Shannon Brooks & Voodoo Highway**; and 10-11 p.m. **Afrodesia**.

Saturday

National Day of Prayer Trail of Tears Centennial Breakfast

The outdoor **National Day of Prayer Trail of Tears Centennial Breakfast** held at The Trail of Tears site on the banks of the Arkansas River will begin at 8:00 a.m. sponsored by the North Little Rock Kiwanis Club and Roller Funeral Homes. The ceremony will feature music by area choirs including the Award Winning **Philander Smith Choir**, a Native American blessing ceremony and ritual lighting of the campfire, and a traditional native flute solo by **Oglala Lakota healer, John Two-Hawks**. Guest speakers will be **United States Senator Blanche Lincoln (Dem-AR)**, **Dr. Dan Littlefield**, UALR Professor and noted author who will speak on the subject of the historical importance of our north shore riverbank; and **Chaplin Mark Quay** of the 189th Air Borne. Arkansas National Guard **General Jack Ryan** (Ret) will be serving as Master of Ceremonies. A military tribute to the U.S. Air force & U.S. Coast Guard is also planned.

Centennial Bike Ride

A **Centennial Bike Ride** organized by **Alderman Charlie Hight** will roll out immediately following the breakfast. Casual bikers will proceed along the North Shore River Walk bicycle trail to Murry Lock & Dam and back, and more experienced bikers will take a more extensive 32-mile tour ride throughout the city, looping back through the bicycle path.

Four Entertainment Stages

At 10 a.m., four stages featuring a wide variety of musicians, dancers, comedians, choirs, hand bell choirs, and even an Elvis impersonator, will provide non-stop entertainment throughout the day.

Must-See Train & Trolley Exhibits

With the city's deep roots closely associated with the development of rail transportation in our city, other must-see exhibits will be the Union Pacific dining cars and crane and the North Little Rock Trolley Car display sponsored by Central Arkansas Transit.

Military Salute

The only pause in the entertainment will occur at 12:00 noon , when a military tribute complete with helicopter and C-130 fly-overs, 21 gun salute, and Taps will be played with a Moment of Silence to commemorate and pay tribute to all who have served in our nation's military.

Activity & Exhibit Stations

The following special activity and exhibit areas designated as **Stations** (to commemorate North Little Rock's railroad town history) will be located throughout the festival area and will highlight different aspects of life in our city:

***Union Pacific Reunion Station** (the old Post Office on Main Street) will host individual photography sessions for identified groups and organizations with an historical tie to the city.

These Reunion Photos will then be included in the Time Capsule to be buried in the Centennial Garden for the NLR Bicentennial and on display in the NLR History Commission.

***Future Station**, sponsored by The **North Little Rock Chamber of Commerce and U.S. Bank**, will present an exciting look at the present & future of North Little Rock's economic development, including the exciting **Bass Pro** exhibit "**The King of Bucks**". Photo displays of the planned Maritime Museum and the USS Razorback Submarine will also be housed here.

***Community Critters Station** will feature active and interactive animal exhibits, including Little Rock Zoo Animal Ambassadors, NLR Animal Shelter Mobile Unit, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission Dog Handlers and Falconers, Little Rock Air force Base Working Dogs Demonstration and Leadership Mounted Patrol.

***Pulaski Tech Children's Station** will feature mimes, clowns, State Fair Carousel and Carnival rides for kids, scouting display, and really cool inflatables..

Historical Tributes

Historical tributes include a **Progressive History Tour** where docents will be available at various historical sites, a U.S. Marshalls Historic Campsite, and North Little Rock Historic Police Officers will be roaming in authentic historical period uniforms.

Our Story (3-act) Play

Our Story-Twin City Bank proudly presents this 3-act original play written by **Vincent Insalaco**, researched by the **North Little Rock History Commission**, and performed by the **North Little Rock High School Drama Department**, under the direction of **Carole Ann McAdams**. The performance will be staged in the beautiful theater setting of the historic North Little Rock Elks Lodge #1004 (directly behind City Hall).

Centennial Cache & U.S. Postal Cancellation

Michael Drake, Director of Main Street Argenta, unveiled the official **Centennial Cache image** and the **U.S. Postal Cancellation**. This will be of special interest to stamp collectors statewide, because the cancellation will only be given at the festival.

Centennial Garden and Memorial

The **NLR Centennial Committee** has also planned a legacy. A **Centennial Garden and Memorial** will be build in NLR's Faucette Park. The design will be announced at the Opening Ceremonies on April 30th. **Personalized "Brick Pavers"** will be used to build the Memorial which Centennial planners hope will become an attraction for future visitors to our City. The personalized "Brick Pavers" can be purchased for \$50 per brick by calling the NLR Visitors Bureau at 758-1424 or by visiting the city web site

Arkansas Heritage Month To Be Announced

Melissa Whitfield, Communications Director for the Department of Arkansas Heritage, spoke about **Governor Huckabee's** planned announcement of **Arkansas Heritage Month** at the festival Opening Ceremonies.

Thrilling the crowd with both an opening and closing sneak peak of her singing performance at the upcoming Centennial event was **Evangeline Parker**, Community Relations Director for Comcast.

Closing the media conference, **Insalaco** reminded the public that all events and entertainment are FREE and open to the public.